

ABSTRACT

Closeness in the Same-Sex Friendships of Men in Long-Distance and Geographically Close Platonic Relationships

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The present study sought to find how men negotiate closeness in their same-sex long-distance friendships. Findings from Fehr (2004) were used to guide the hypotheses. Men were believed to prefer the use of shared activity to build closeness even though they regard self-disclosure as the primary pathway to closeness in their same-sex friendships. Self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment were each measured in regards to men's best geographically close or long-distance friendship. The relationship of gender orientation and homophobia to these variables was also tested. The results showed that men were more satisfied with their geographically close friendships than men in their long-distance friendships. Feminine gender orientation was found to be positively related to self-disclosure, closeness, and commitment. Homophobia was found to be negatively correlated with self-disclosure.

Closeness in the Same-Sex Friendships of Men in Long-Distance
and Geographically Close Platonic Relationships

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Friendships provide us with a means of achieving our basic need for a close connection with other individuals (Baxter, 1990). Decades of research has determined that there are various benefits to friendship. One of these benefits is a decrease in loneliness (Oswald & Clark, 2003). Friendships also help people deal with stress. Findings have shown that interacting with a friend in a time of stress can help reduce negative affect (Winstead & Derlega, 1985). Friendships have also been found to benefit people by providing conversation, enjoyment, happiness, relaxation, and instrumental and socioemotional rewards (Fehr, 2000; Wright, 2006).

In addition to the general benefits of friendship, men derive specific benefits from their same-sex friendships and regard these friendships as important. Compared to other friendship types, men generally seek a companion in their friendships with men as opposed to a confidante (Wood, 2001). Male friendships provide men with a sense of acceptance, trust, and dependability (Grief, 2009; Inman, 1996). Men have been found to view their same-sex friendships as important for reasons such as providing support (e.g., friends help men get through difficult times), companionship (e.g., men feel good when they have a friend to share things with), and self-disclosure (e.g., men feel that some topics can only be discussed with other men) (Grief, 2006). Men also benefit from friendships in that their male friends can help them in times of need (Wood, 2001). Male

same-sex friendships warrant further study because they are a unique type of relationship that provides significant benefits to men.

Male Same-Sex Friendships

Male same-sex friendships are generally characterized as side-by-side, instrumental, and agentic (Wright & Scanlon, 1991). Agentic, in this case, refers to a friendship characterized by a focus on shared activity and companionship (Baumgarte & Nelson, 2009). Male same-sex friendships tend to involve competition and low levels of overt physical affection and verbal communication (Grief, 2009). In terms of conversations, men have been found to be less willing to self-disclose personal/intimate/emotional information with a male friend and instead generally focus more on topical conversation (Bowman, 2008). However, men will self-disclose with their male friends from time to time (see Inman, 1996); they just do not self-disclose often.

Closeness in Male Friendships

Despite being characterized by low levels of self-disclosure, male same-sex friends develop closeness primarily through shared activities. Closeness has been studied in depth and conceptualized in various ways. For instance, one definition of closeness is based on the level of liking, interdependence, and mutual knowledge between two individuals (Bowman, 2008). Another definition of closeness is based on how individuals show they care for one another and interact with one another (Polimeni, Hardie, & Buzwell, 2002). The former definition of closeness will be used in the present study.

Past studies have revealed two ways to communicate closeness in friendships: a masculine approach and a feminine approach (see Wood & Inman, 1993). Men generally utilize the masculine approach of communicating closeness, or “closeness in the doing” (Wood & Inman, 1993). The masculine approach to communicating closeness involves the use of shared activities and doing favors for one another as a way of communicating closeness. Men have been found to generally associate relational closeness with drinking together, hand shakes, and discussing sexual issues as opposed to self-disclosure and emotional expressiveness (Floyd, 1995). In contrast, the feminine approach to communicating closeness is characterized by talk and self-disclosure. This tendency of men to communicate closeness in a particular way has been referred to as “gendered closeness” (Floyd, 1996), and as such, men have access to a range of gendered styles and behaviors. Research has found that compared to other friendship types, men tend to rely more on the masculine style of communicating closeness in their same-sex friendships (Floyd, 1995; Grief, 2009; Swain, 1989; Wood & Inman, 1993). The use of this style explains findings that men prefer doing an activity with a male friend instead of engaging in conversation (Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, 1988; Baumgarte & Nelson, 2009).

Even though men engage in shared activities with their male friends, they do not perceive activity as the primary pathway to closeness. Instead, men generally believe that self-disclosure is the primary pathway to closeness. Support for the perspective that men regard self-disclosure as the primary pathway to closeness has been found by Fehr (2004), who conducted six studies guided by the theory that people possess knowledge of certain patterns of relating that create the foundation for closeness expectations in regards to same-sex friendships. She found that participants in the study were able to rate the

importance of different interaction patterns in their close friendships. For men in particular, self-disclosure interactions played a more significant role in creating a sense of closeness compared to shared activities. She concluded that men agree on a common pathway to closeness (i.e., through self-disclosure), but do not choose to follow this pathway (Reis, Senchak, & Solomon, 1985). Instead, men prefer communicating closeness with their same-sex friends through shared activity. Other studies have found similar results in terms of men perceiving self-disclosure as being the primary pathway to closeness in friendships even though they exhibit low levels of self-disclosure in their own same-sex friendships (Holmstrom, 2009; Reisman, 1990). Although Fehr (2004) uses the term intimacy in her study, the present study will use the term closeness instead. Previous studies have used both terms interchangeably (see Radmacher & Azmitia, 2006; Polimeni, Hardie, & Buzwell, 2002).

The findings from Fehr's (2004) study provide convincing evidence that males perceive self-disclosure as the primary pathway to closeness, but instead communicate closeness through activity in their same-sex friendships. However, her study was only applicable to geographically close friendships (GCFs). Her findings can be applied to a different context of male same-sex friendships, such as the long-distance friendship (LDF). Closeness in male same-sex LDFs warrants study because LDFs provide a new context to examine how men negotiate closeness in their same-sex friendships.

LDFs are becoming more commonplace in our society. Male same-sex friendships have been influenced by a changing culture that no longer insures that these friendships will remain geographically close. Now, people are much more mobile than at any time in our history due to various factors. Current modes of transportation make it

much easier for people to move and visit loved ones. Electronic communication/ technology makes communicating over a distance more convenient with cell phones, instant messenger, and email. Family culture has changed to where family members can move away long-distances and still maintain frequent/regular contact with each other. The current war situation is also a factor increasing the mobility of people. Many men are finding themselves maintaining long-distance friendships with friends who are in the military. Colleges add to the number of long-distance friends as well. Colleges are numerous, with more colleges now than at any other time in our history. Individuals have many options for what college they want to go to, and better transportation allows them to go out of state, thus shifting their high school friends to long-distance friends. Long-distance friendships are more of a reality now than in the past. Because of these changes we have experienced as a society, more attention needs to be given to closeness in LDFs. In addition to increasing commonality, there are other reasons why LDFs, and male same-sex LDFs in particular, warrant further study.

First, studying male same-sex LDFs provides an opportunity to explore how men adapt to communicating closeness in a context other than that of a GCF. Results from such a study could shed light on the influence that distance may have on male same-sex friendships, including the motivations males have to maintain friendships (e.g., if men are willing to adapt their approach to closeness in order to maintain their friendship).

Second, the topic of closeness in male same-sex LDFs has been relatively under-studied in the IPC literature. Studies on LDFs generally do not focus exclusively on males, but rather group the data from male participants and female participants together. Studies concentrating on male same-sex LDFs can provide for within group variation and account

for a more detailed analysis of male friendships. Third, a study on closeness in male same-sex LDFs can verify how men negotiate closeness in both the GC and LD context. If males tend to utilize shared activities in expressing closeness in GCFs, then this would potentially be restrained due to distance, preventing regular activity together in LDFs (e.g., males could self-disclose more). The goal of the present study is to assess how men negotiate closeness in a same-sex LDF by examining differences between LDFs and GCFs in terms of self-disclosure, satisfaction, and commitment within the male-male friendship.

Long-Distance Friendships

LDFs differ from GCFs in a few key ways. First, and most obvious, LDFs are characterized by a lack of frequent face-to-face interaction (Dellmann-Jenkins, Bernare-Paolucci, & Rushing, 1993). Despite these differences, LDFs have been found to be similar to GCFs in terms of satisfaction and closeness (Johnson, 2001). In regards to maintenance strategies, GCFs are characterized by the use of more social networks and joint activities than LDFs. Both LDFs and GCFs exhibited similar amounts of openness and assurances, suggesting that openness and assurances were more important in maintaining friendships regardless of distance (Johnson, 2001). The lack of face-to-face interaction in LDFs may influence how men maintain/build closeness in their friendships, primarily through the opportunity to self-disclose more.

Communication, including self-disclosure, has been found to be positively correlated with friendship satisfaction and commitment in that best friends (same and opposite-sex) who communicated frequently during college were not likely to experience a decrease in both commitment and satisfaction (Oswald & Clark, 2003). High school

best friends who remained best friends during college were characterized by emotional support, self-disclosure, frequent interaction, and positivity. In addition, self-disclosure was found to be an important factor in the maintenance of friendships. This finding suggested that communication was an important factor in maintaining satisfaction and commitment in adolescent friendships (same and opposite-sex). Proximity was not found to have a significant influence on the maintenance of these friendships (Oswald & Clark, 2003).

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure can be defined as privately communicating information about oneself that others are not likely to know (Bowman, 2008). According to Fehr (2004), men agree that self-disclosure is the primary pathway to closeness, but instead choose to engage in shared activity in their same-sex GCFs. However, the LDF context challenges this finding because in the LDF context, men generally do not have the option to engage in shared activity (the preferred method of communicating closeness). In this case, the only option is to self-disclose more. Thus, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Males in same-sex LDFs will self-disclose more than males in same-sex GCFs.

Closeness

LDFs are characterized by less face-to-face contact which, in turn, would likely promote more self-disclosure. One would assume that male same-sex LDFs would be closer than GCFs because they promote more self-disclosure. However, Fehr (2004) found that even though men regard self-disclosure as the primary pathway to closeness in their same-sex friendships, they prefer to communicate closeness through shared activity.

As explained above, numerous studies have found that men prefer to develop closeness through shared activity in their same-sex friendships (Floyd, 1995; Grief, 2009; Swain, 1989; Wood & Inman, 1993). If men prefer communicating closeness through shared activities in their same-sex friendships, as previous studies suggest, then they would feel closer in their GCFs because they would have more opportunities to engage in this preferred method of communicating closeness. Thus, the second hypothesis is:

H2: Male same-sex GCFs will be closer than male same-sex LDFs.

Satisfaction and Commitment

According to Fehr (2004), men prefer to engage in shared activities as a pathway to closeness as opposed to self-disclosure. Based on this finding, men would likely be more satisfied and committed to a friendship that encouraged their primary method of communicating closeness (i.e., shared activity). GCFs are characterized by frequent face-to-face contact, which in turn provides men the opportunity to engage in shared activities. However, LDFs do not provide such an opportunity. Because men prefer communicating closeness in their same-sex friendships through shared activity, men would likely feel more satisfied and committed to their GCFs as opposed to their LDFs. Therefore, the third and fourth predictions of the current study will be:

H3: Males in same-sex GCFs will be more satisfied than males in same-sex LDFs.

H4: Males in same-sex GCFs will be more committed than males in same-sex LDFs.

Gender Orientation

The findings of Fehr (2004) are presented in terms of sex differences between men and women. However, these findings are more appropriately framed in terms of

gender orientation (masculinity vs. femininity), not sex. Given her findings that men perceive self-disclosure as the primary pathway to closeness even though they do not engage in it as much as women, it is arguable that men generally utilize a masculine style of communicating closeness (e.g., shared activities) in their same-sex friendships even though the feminine style of communicating closeness (e.g., self-disclosure) is perceived to create greater closeness. Men may still adopt a feminine style of communicating closeness because the use of these styles is not determined by one's sex, but instead by one's gender orientation. In this sense, more masculine men might adopt a more masculine style of communicating closeness, while more feminine men, or men who are not as concerned with issues of homophobia and masculine norms, might adopt a more feminine style of communicating closeness.

Gender has been found to moderately influence the amount of self-disclosure in friendships. Despite mixed results, masculinity does have some influence on self-disclosure in male friendships, with masculinity being associated with less willingness to self-disclose and femininity and androgyny being associated with more self-disclosure (Bowman, 2008). The hypotheses regarding gender will be made for male same-sex friendships in general as opposed to making a comparison to LDFs and GCFs because there are few, if any, studies that observe the influence of gender orientation on male friendships in the LD context. Thus, the next hypotheses are:

H5a: Masculinity will be negatively correlated with self-disclosure.

H5b: Femininity will be positively correlated with self-disclosure.

Femininity has been perceived by scholars as being more relationship oriented than masculinity (Wood, 1993). This perception has been supported through studies that

have found, in romantic relationships, a feminine gender orientation is a better predictor of the use of relational maintenance strategies than a masculine gender orientation (Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000). In addition, femininity has been found to be associated with a more routine use of relational maintenance strategies while masculinity was found to be associated with a more strategic use of relational maintenance strategies (Aylor & Dainton, 2004). Even though these findings were found for romantic relationships, there is a possibility that feminine individuals would use more maintenance strategies in their friendships as well. If more feminine individuals routinely use more maintenance strategies than masculine individuals, then feminine men would likely have a closer same-sex friendship than masculine men because they use more maintenance strategies that could potentially build closeness. Past research supports the notion that femininity is associated with higher levels of intimacy in friendship, while masculinity is associated with lower levels of intimacy in friendships (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Williams, 1985).

If a feminine gender orientation is related to a greater feeling of closeness in one's friendship, then that individual would likely be more satisfied and committed to their friendship in order to keep this feeling of closeness. Likewise, if a masculine gender orientation is related to a lesser feeling of closeness in one's friendship, then that individual would likely be less satisfied and less committed to their friendship. Past studies have found that maintenance strategy use in friendships is related to increased levels of friendship satisfaction and commitment. Specifically, the maintenance strategies of positivity, openness, interaction, and supportiveness are related to increased satisfaction in friendships. The strategies of interaction and supportiveness are related to

increased commitment in friendships (Oswald, Clark, & Kelly, 2004). Based on these findings, if feminine individuals use maintenance strategies more often, then these individuals will potentially be more satisfied and committed to their friendship. Thus, the following hypotheses are advanced:

H6a: Masculinity will be negatively correlated with closeness.

H6b: Femininity will be positively correlated with closeness.

H7a: Masculinity will be negatively correlated with satisfaction.

H7b: Femininity will be positively correlated with satisfaction.

H8a: Masculinity will be negatively correlated with commitment.

H8b: Femininity will be positively correlated with commitment.

Homophobia

Many arguments exist to explain the masculine style of communicating closeness with male friends, one of these is the influence of homophobia. Homophobia has been attributed to male same-sex friendships having lower levels of closeness than female same-sex friendships because men have consistently been found to be more homophobic than women (Bank & Hansford, 2000). Homophobia has been advanced as a reason why men do not self-disclose in their same-sex friendships as much as they share activities together (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Bowman, 2009; Grief, 2009). One of the reasons provided for the low levels of overt affection in male same-sex friendships is the fear of sexual overtones that may arise from expressing affection to a male friend (Floyd & Morman, 1997).

In the present study, the term “homophobia” will refer to a fear of being perceived by others as a homosexual (Floyd & Morman, 2000). Other studies have also stated that

homophobia constrains men in how they communicate closeness and their willingness to self-disclose (Bowman, 2009; Grief, 2009). If men want to present themselves as heterosexual, then they would be reluctant to adopt a feminine style of communication (i.e., disclose more) with a male friend because the use of a more emotional/feminine style in the context of a male same-sex friendship may make them be perceived as homosexual. Thus, the next hypothesis is:

H9a: Homophobia will be negatively correlated with self-disclosure.

Homophobia has also been found to be associated with lower levels of closeness in male same-sex friendships. Past studies have shown that homophobia is positively related to emotional restraint (Bank & Hansford, 2000). In addition, homophobia toward gay men has been found to be associated with lower levels of intimacy in male same-sex friendships (Bank & Hansford, 2000; Devlin & Cowan, 1985). This relation is generally stronger in male same-sex friendships. While these studies did not strictly define homophobia in terms of a fear of appearing homosexual, it can still be assumed that homophobia is associated with a lower level of closeness in male same-sex friendships. If homophobia is related to a lower level of closeness in male same-sex friendships, then homophobic men would likely feel less satisfied and committed to their friendship. Homophobia has been found to be a possible explanation for lower support in male same-sex friendships (Bank & Hansford, 2000). Because support is a maintenance strategy that can potentially lead to greater levels of satisfaction and commitment in friendships (Oswald, Clark, & Kelly, 2004), it is possible that low levels of support can lead to lower levels of friendship satisfaction and commitment. Thus, if homophobia reduces support

in male friendships, then it might reduce the level of satisfaction and commitment in that friendship. Based on this logic, the final hypotheses are:

H9b: Homophobia will be negatively correlated with closeness.

H9c: Homophobia will be negatively correlated with satisfaction.

H9d: Homophobia will be negatively correlated with commitment.

CHAPTER TWO

Methods

Participants

Participants ($N = 211$) in the current study were men between the ages of 18 and 73 ($M = 27.38$, $SD = 11.71$). The majority were Caucasian (81%), followed by Hispanic (5.7%), Asian/Pacific Islander (5.2%), African American (4.7%), Native American (.9%), and Other (1.9%). Most of the participants were single (48.8%), followed by those in a dating relationship (28.4%), and those who were married (22.7%). Most participants were pursuing a Bachelor's degree (40.8%), followed by those who have already earned a Bachelor's degree (20.9%), those pursuing a Graduate/Professional degree (13.3%), those who have a High School diploma/GED (10.4%), those who have a professional degree (8.1%), those who have a doctoral degree (4.3%), and those with an Associate's degree (2.4%).

Participants were also asked to report some demographic information about their close, same-sex friend. The age of the participants' friends ranged from 18 to 66 ($M = 27.27$, $SD = 11.50$). The majority of the participant's friends were Caucasian (80.1%), followed by Asian/Pacific Islander (6.6%), Hispanic (5.2%), African American (4.3%), Native American (.9%), and Other (1.9%). Most of the friends were single (36.5%), followed by those in a dating relationship (32.7%), and those who were married (29.9%). For purposes of the current study, a long-distance friendship was defined as: 1) you and your close, same-sex friend live at least 50 miles apart; 2) your friendship is characterized

by little or no face-to-face contact; 3) your friendship may have started as geographically close and is presently long-distance. Men in long-distance friendships had been friends for an average of 10.85 years ($SD = 8.66$). Likewise, a geographically close friendship was defined as: (1) you and your close, same-sex friend live less than 50 miles apart, and (2) your friendship is characterized by frequent face-to-face contact. Men in geographically close friendships reported being friends on average 7.34 years ($SD = 8.29$).

Procedure

In order to recruit participants for the current study, a snowball sample technique was used in which messages requesting help with a study focused on male/male close friendship, and containing a link to an on-line survey (supported by Survey Monkey), were mass distributed by email. These email messages were sent through Facebook friendship networks, by purchasing Facebook advertisement postings, and through inclusion within a local apartment newsletter. Participants who received the message containing the web-link for the study were asked to complete the survey and then pass the link on to other men they knew. All email messages clearly stated that only men 18 years or older should take the survey. No incentive (e.g., extra credit) was offered for participation in the current study and in order to encourage participants to be honest in their responses, participants were assured that the survey was anonymous and confidential. The online survey had a front page informing men of their rights as participants in the study. Finally, all participants were randomly assigned to either the LD or GC survey; once there, the definition for either the geographically close or long-distance friendship was provided (see above) and participants were instructed to

determine their closest male friend in this context (i.e., LD or GC) and respond with this particular friend as the target for their answers to the survey questions. Survey Monkey reported a total of 259 online surveys were started/attempted and out of those, 131 were fully completed. Only the completed online surveys were retained for analysis.

Additionally, two different pencil and paper versions of the survey (one for long-distance and the other for geographically close friends) were randomly distributed to undergraduate male students in a large public speaking course at a medium size, private university in the south-central United States . The paper surveys were printed from the Survey Monkey website and were exact replicas of the two on-line surveys. Slight changes were made to the cover page and the thank you page by removing references to the online survey; otherwise, the questions were exactly the same. In all, 80 paper surveys were completed and returned.

Measurement

Using 7-point Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree) the following variables were measured for the current study: friendship activity, self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, commitment, gender orientation, and homophobia.

Friendship Activity was measured using a modified version of the Friendship Behavior Questionnaire used by Bowman (2008). The modified scale for the current study included 20 items that assessed the type and amount of activity that the participant perceived to engage in with his close, same-sex friend (e.g., talk on the phone, go to the movies, watch a sports event).

Self-disclosure was measured using a modified version of a self-disclosure scale developed by Wheelers and Grotz (1977); additionally, one item was used from the

Friendship Behavior Questionnaire (Bowman, 2008). The scale included six items that measured the participant's perceived amount of self-disclosure in the friendship (e.g., "I often divulge information about myself that I normally do not tell others") ($\alpha = .87$).

Closeness was measured using the Inclusion of the Other in the Self (IOS) scale developed by Aron, Aron, and Smollan (1992). The IOS scale asserts that in a close relationship, an individual acts as if there is a degree of inclusion of the *other* within the self, (i.e., close friends believe they are interconnected with each other). The IOS scale consists of a set of Venn-like diagrams, each representing varying levels of overlap. One circle in each pair is labeled "self" and the other circle is labeled "other." The participants were instructed to select the pair of circles that best depicted the nature of perceived closeness in the friendship with their same-sex friend. The IOS scale has been extensively validated in both experimental and correlation research paradigms (see Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992).

Relational satisfaction was measured by Floyd and Morman's relational satisfaction scale (2000). Using six Likert-type items, the scale measured the extent of participants' satisfaction with the nature of their relationship with their friend with items such as, "My relationship with my friend is just the way I want it to be" ($\alpha = .89$).

Relational commitment was measured using a modified version of the Investment Model Scale by Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew (1998). This scale included five Likert-type items that measured the participant's perception of his commitment to his friendship (e.g., "I am committed to maintaining my friendship with my male friend) ($\alpha = .92$).

Gender orientation was measured using a revised version of Bem's Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) as refined by Wheelless & Dierks-Stewart (1981). This measure

used ten personality characteristics associated with traditional American masculinity (e.g., acts as a leader, aggressive, independent; $\alpha = .84$) and ten personality characteristics typically associated with American femininity (e.g., gentle, friendly, supportive; $\alpha = .88$).

Finally, *homophobia* was measured using a modified version of a homophobia scale developed by Floyd (2000). This scale included five items used to measure the participant's fear of being perceived by others as gay (e.g., "I would be very upset if someone else thought I was gay") ($\alpha = .82$).

CHAPTER THREE

Results

The purpose of the current study was to analyze potential differences in how men in geographically close versus long-distance same-sex friendships negotiated issues of closeness within their relationships. Based on Fehr's (2004) findings that men prefer building closeness in their same-sex friendships through shared activities, four hypotheses were developed that compared male same-sex GCFs with male same-sex LDFs in terms of self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment. In addition, hypotheses were developed to examine how gender orientation and homophobia influence male same-sex friendships in general. For both gender orientation and homophobia, the four relational variables of self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment were measured.

Friendship Activity

An activity scale was used in order to get the men in the present study (1) to focus on their friendship maintenance (2) to think more deeply about their closest male friend and (3) because research shows that activity is significant in regards to closeness in male same-sex friendships. The men in the study were presented with 20 different typical friendship activities and asked to report how often he participated in these activities with his close GC or LD friend (see Table 1). Overall, the male/male friendship activities with the highest frequency of participation were texting, going out to eat, talking on the phone, drinking together, and going to a sporting event.

Table 1
Activity Scale

Activity	Mean	Standard Deviation
Texting	4.76	2.03
Going out to eat	4.28	1.78
Talking on the phone	4.00	1.75
Drinking together	3.61	2.25
Going to a sporting event	3.51	2.01
Watching television	3.20	1.84
Watching a movie at home	3.12	1.90
Going to a movie theater	3.09	1.78
Playing sports together	3.07	1.94
Traveling together	2.82	1.66
Communicating via instant messenger	2.67	2.07
Spending the night together	2.67	1.90
Playing video games	2.58	1.78
Working out together	2.53	1.77
Going shopping together	2.23	1.54
Going to a concert	2.17	1.59
Going camping	1.97	1.51
Working on a car	1.62	1.25
Going hunting	1.51	1.25
Going to a play	1.50	1.11

Long-Distance Context

Based on Fehr's (2004) findings that men prefer shared activity as the pathway to closeness in their same-sex friendships, LDFs were hypothesized to have more self-disclosure than GCFs. Three more hypotheses predicted that male same-sex GCFs would be characterized by more closeness, satisfaction, and commitment than male same-sex LDFs. In order to test these hypotheses, a MANOVA was designed. In this model, relationship type (i.e., LDF & GCF) served as the categorical predictor variable while self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment were used as the continuous dependent variables. The multivariate test for the model for the relationship type was significant (Wilks' Lambda = .91, $F(1, 201) = 4.78, p = .00, \eta^2 = .09$). Relationship type was found to have a significant main effect for satisfaction ($F(1, 201) = 13.04, p = .00, \eta^2 = .06$) such that males in same-sex GCFs were more satisfied ($M = 5.80, SD = .12$) with their friendship than males in same-sex LDFs ($M = 5.19, SD = .12$). Therefore, only the third hypothesis was supported.

Gender Orientation

Based on findings in previous studies on gender orientation, hypotheses five through eight predicted that masculinity would be negatively correlated with self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment, while femininity would be positively correlated with self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment. Pearson correlations were used to test these hypotheses. Overall, masculinity was not significantly correlated with any of the variables of interest (i.e., self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, or commitment). Hypotheses H5a, H6a, H7a, and H8a were not supported.

However, femininity was positively correlated with self-disclosure ($r = .33, p = .00$), with closeness ($r = .27, p = .00$), and with commitment ($r = .29, p = .00$). The more feminine a male is, the more he self-discloses, the closer he feels, and the more committed he is in his male same-sex friendship. Hypotheses H5b, H6b, and H8b were supported. Femininity was not significantly correlated with satisfaction, so hypothesis H7b was not supported.

Homophobia

The last four hypotheses predicted that homophobia would be negatively correlated with self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment. Homophobia was negatively correlated with self-disclosure ($r = -.25, p = .00$). The more homophobic a male is, the less he self-discloses with his male friend. Hypothesis H9a was supported. Homophobia was not significantly correlated with closeness, satisfaction, or commitment. Hypotheses H9b, H9c, and H9d were not supported.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

The goal of the present study was to assess how men negotiate closeness in their same-sex friendships by examining different relationship types and their influence on common indicators of relationship quality (e.g., self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment). Male same-sex GCFs and LDFs were different in terms of satisfaction, but were not significantly different in terms of self-disclosure, closeness, and commitment. Men were more satisfied with their same-sex GCFs than they were in their same-sex LDFs. These findings do not support previous studies (Johnson, 2001; Oswald and Clark, 2003) on LDFs that found that communication was more important than proximity in terms of friendship maintenance.

The findings that males are more satisfied with their GCFs can be explained by the idea of gendered closeness. Men generally communicate closeness with their male friends through shared activities. In an LDF, men cannot take part in many shared activities except during times they visit each other. With less access to shared activities, men would potentially be less satisfied with their LDF. According to Fehr (2004), even though men know self-disclosure is vital to closeness, they do not self-disclose with their male friends as much as they engage in activity. The current findings suggest the possibility that even though men in same-sex GCFs and LDFs do not differ in terms of closeness, men may be more satisfied with closeness that emerges through shared activity. Thus, in male same-sex friendships, there is a possibility that closeness through

shared activities is more satisfying than closeness through self-disclosure. However, this relationship between satisfaction and closeness through shared activity is only speculative.

One potentially influential issue here is gender orientation (i.e., the relationship between masculine and feminine orientations and self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, and commitment). Masculinity was not significantly correlated with self-disclosure, closeness, satisfaction, or commitment. Femininity was positively correlated with self-disclosure, closeness, and commitment, but was not correlated with satisfaction. The more feminine a male is, the more he self-discloses, the closer he feels, and the more committed he is to his male same-sex friendship. The finding on masculinity is not consistent with that of Bowman (2008), who found that masculinity was positively correlated with men's self-disclosure with their friend. This finding was explained through the realization that some of the men high in masculinity were also high in femininity (i.e., androgynous). However, the findings of the present study fit with those of Bowman (2008), who found that femininity was positively correlated with men's self-disclosure with their friend. This finding was explained through femininity's association with self-disclosure and expressiveness.

The findings of the present study can be explained by Fehr's (2004) findings that men regard self-disclosure as the primary pathway to closeness with their male friends. Because feminine men self-disclose more (self-disclosure is part of the feminine style of closeness), they may feel closer, thus giving men a reason to be more committed to their friendship. However, this sequence is only speculative because the findings did not show that self-disclosure was related to closeness.

The present findings suggest that homophobia is a factor that possibly leads to a decrease in self-disclosure. Even though LDFs demand a more feminine style of communicating closeness, the present study suggests that regardless of the influence of relationship type, homophobia appears to be negatively influencing levels of self-disclosure within the male same-sex friendship.

Limitations

One possible limitation was that the amount of time LDFs see each other was not measured. Such data would have been helpful in determining how much of an influence activity could have in a male same-sex LDF. For example, LDFs may visit each other once every two weeks and still get to do activities together as opposed to LDFs who only see each other once a year. In addition, the distance of each friendship was not controlled for in this study.

A second limitation was that participants were not asked to state if their LDF started as a GCF. LDFs that began as GCFs could be closer than those that only started as an LDF because the male friends had an opportunity to take part in shared activities when the friendship began.

Future Research

Future research could look at maintenance in female same-sex LDFs. In addition, future studies can look at the actual relational maintenance strategies of male same-sex friendships using the typology of maintenance strategies developed by Canary and Stafford (1994). Finally, future research can investigate the role of shared activities as a

pathway to closeness in the male same-sex LD relationship (i.e., how do men reframe/reconstitute activity within the long-distance context?).

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

The present study makes a number of important contributions to the current literature on the same-sex friendships between men. One contribution is the finding that no differences exist between male same-sex LDFs and GCFs in terms of self-disclosure, closeness, and commitment. This finding suggests that LDFs and GCFs are similar regarding levels of self-disclosure, closeness, and commitment. A second contribution is that male same-sex GCFs were found to be more satisfying than male same-sex LDFs. This finding supports the assumption that men prefer to communicate closeness in their friendships through shared activities (see Fehr, 2004; Wood and Inman, 1993). Regarding gender orientation, femininity, not masculinity, was influential in promoting relationship quality in male same-sex friendships. Finally, homophobia was not as influential as theorized/found in other studies, but it does have an association with limiting self-disclosure between male friends.

Friendships provide us with a means of achieving our basic need for a close connection with other individuals (Baxter, 1990). Male same-sex friendships are a unique type of friendship in that they are characterized by a reliance on shared activities to communicate closeness. These friendships benefit men in various ways, such as a means of support, companionship, and self-disclosure (Grief, 2006). More importantly, male same-sex friendships provide a context for men that encourage their preferred method of communicating closeness (i.e., shared activity). Men have a unique way of

communicating closeness, and studying male same-sex friendships helps us gain a better understanding of this form of closeness.

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